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BUDGETARY PROVISION FOR SOCIAL NEEDS¹

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THREE momentous budgetary opportunities now confront social workers: the national budget's provision for economy and efficiency; the New York city budget estimates for 1913; and the congressional bill for chartering the Rockefeller Foundation. Each of these opportunities typifies a condition which prevails throughout the country; *i. e.*, our vision of social needs has far outstripped our means and our habit of coöperating to meet these needs. A few minutes given by social workers in April 1912 to these three opportunities would do more good than millions of dollars and hundreds of mass meetings given to the same subjects next December.

The same change is needed to give to the Rockefeller Foundation bill the united aggressive support of social workers and givers as is needed to arouse them to the aggravation of social needs which must follow neglect to register the judgment of social workers in favor of the other two enormous possible benefactions above mentioned: (a) the national efficiency and economy program and (b) an adequate budget for meeting New York city's social needs in 1913.

There is hardly a social agency in the United States that aims at efficiency that has not tried to secure support from Mr. Rockefeller. Colleges, charities, voters' leagues, hospitals, settlements, churches—one and all are to be found among Mr. Rockefeller's regular correspondents. One and all are offered now, through a bill to charter the Rockefeller Foundation, joint responsibility for spending a fund of at least one million, perhaps five million dollars a year. The deed of gift says in effect: "We want this money used for public welfare. There is no restriction upon its use except that it shall be for the

¹ Read at the meeting of the Academy of Political Science, April 18, 1912.

public welfare. We want it spent according to the best-informed suggestion and most enlightened criticism of those familiar with social needs."

Yet so unaccustomed are we to thinking about our work in terms of the way government does its business that we have not in this matter of the Rockefeller Foundation connected our judgment and wishes with the national machinery necessary to give them effect. I mean that we have not let Congress know that we believe it should pass this act of incorporation, and that we want such passing done in the name of human welfare and not as a courtesy to Mr. Rockefeller and the distinguished legislators who sponsor the bill. If you can explain why you and I have not spent two cents and ten minutes writing our opinion to our congressman or senator in support of this huge welfare fund, I can explain why so many of us overlook other budgetary opportunities.

A second great opportunity which most of us will lose relates to an item of \$200,000 which Congress has been asked to insert in its budget for next year for continuing the work of the President's commission on economy and efficiency. No one doubts that more efficiency and more economy are needed in national departments. Everyone concedes that millions upon millions could be saved whether or not Senator Aldrich overestimated the present waste when he said he could save \$300,000,000 a year if given an opportunity to put efficiency methods at work in national departments. Nobody denies that the efficiency work which began two years ago under the direction of Dr. F. A. Cleveland, chairman of the President's commission, has already saved many times its cost and has laid the basis for saving millions next year.

Yet practically without protest from the social-worker clan, the majority in Congress actually proposes to cut out the \$200,000 necessary to cure the disease of incompetence in national business which these days does infinitely more harm than smallpox or cholera. Men learned in the laws of political psychology talk wisely of what the people want and do not want, and say: "If we cut out the \$200,000, the masses are simple enough to give us credit for a saving of \$200,000. If we leave it in, the

masses will see the \$200,000 with big eyes and will give us no credit for our intended saving of millions." Just think of its being possible in April 1912 for such assertions to go unchallenged by the very group which best of all in the country perhaps is able to picture what one million or five millions or ten millions a year will buy if spent in meeting social needs. Think of what even one million dollars a year spent efficiently by the national government on education and health would do to reduce the call for local charities and corrections, hospitals and the like.

There is still time for social workers and philanthropists to secure letters to congressmen and representatives, and to interest editors, commercial bodies and city clubs in making it understood that this national budgetary provision of \$200,000 for efficiency in spending a billion dollars a year is an urgent need for every locality and every kind of uplift work.

The commission's studies relating to processes, organization, personnel and supplies have already specifically located opportunities to save millions as follows: \$1,000,000 can be saved by omitting needless steps in handling mail; \$250,000 can be saved by using window envelopes; \$100,000 by using multi-graph processes; \$50,000 by discontinuing the affidavits appended to personal expense vouchers; \$500,000 by merely securing the usual reductions in purchasing railroad tickets, as by return trips; millions by standardizing 20,000 supply items; by extending (from 9,000 items before standardization to 30,000 after) the standardizing of supplies, specifications, contracts and method of inspection; millions more by consolidation of related service.

\$200,000 is needed next year:

a. To retain intact the group of experts who have been slowly gathered with congressional approval during the last two years, who are now practised in "team-work," and whose dispersal would be a grievous loss to the nation.

b. To utilize facts already collected through expenditure of the former appropriation of \$200,000 and through the collaboration of fully 2,000 employes and officials who have been brought to coöperate with the commission.

c. To utilize also facts that are in rapid process of collection through improved methods of accounting and reporting already installed as the result of this efficiency work.

d. To assist department and division heads in the administrative improvements declared by all to be necessary.

Congress has already been urged by three special messages to give the efficiency work unanimous non-political, non-partisan support. Putting national departments on an efficiency basis has been unqualifiedly favored by Democratic, Republican and independent papers.

The only avowed reasons for opposing the measure are: (a) a \$200,000 appropriation should be saved; (b) work should be done by congressional committees; (c) work should be done by departments. In answer to these reasons there is ample evidence to prove that:

a. It will cost millions in 1913, and each year thereafter, to save this \$200,000; many times \$200,000 were saved in 1911 and have already been saved in 1912, through use made of information furnished to Congress by the commission—and not otherwise available.

b. This is work that can be done only by one continuing, central, technical body, and cannot be done by numerous congressional committees. Such committees have been comparatively futile because they have been unable to get enough facts and have never had the continuity needful for success. Follow-up work that rebuilds is quite as important as investigation that discloses the need for rebuilding.

c. The departments are already doing much. They will do vastly more if stimulated and guided by a central body of experts armed with authority to enforce uniform, appropriate, modern business methods.

The fulfilment of platform and campaign pledges in 1913 will be practically impossible without such information as this work is accumulating. The continuance of the present efficiency work is an indispensable asset to Democrats and Republicans alike.

The business man's patriotic interest in national business is reason enough for continuing this work for efficiency in national

departments. But in addition, the citizen knows that putting national departments on a modern efficiency basis must in innumerable ways benefit private business and give tremendous impetus to efficiency in city, county and state business throughout the country.

Fortunately New York city's citizens are not voiceless as to budgetary provisions for that city's social needs. But this year we must act earlier than usual. National and state campaigns will make it almost impossible to secure public audience for discussion of social needs and budgetary provisions after June. Prompt action between now and June will pay huge dividends. If we give the city government the benefit of definite knowledge possessed by us respecting social needs not yet met by different departments, the best results will come from pointing out gaps between what the public agree ought to be done through government and what it is actually getting done through government. Here and there is a social need which no government department has yet undertaken to meet and which it is worth while trying to lodge upon the shoulders of taxpayers. Even here, however, success requires that the interest of the right department be enlisted before that department submits its budget estimates next July.

It is most exceptional that discussions of budget estimates ever add to requests made by departments. They frequently subtract from such requests. If, therefore, we wish departments in 1913 to do work never yet undertaken or to do more of certain kinds of work already undertaken, the time for us to present our facts to departments and to the public is between now and June first.

The greatest social worker in New York is the city government; the only picture we ever get of what the city government plans to do and is asked to do is the annual budget estimate; the time to get needs into estimates is now; the time to explain needs is now; although the budget is voted in October all the time between now and October is required to inform the public about budgetary provisions for social needs.

Another set of facts needs emphasis: each agency's budget is all it has to spend plus what the city spends in all depart-

ments; every act of government relieves or aggravates a social need; the most effective philanthropy is that which supplements and inspires government action; the least effective philanthropy is that which tries to take the place of work provided for in the city's budget; the monthly loss of life in New York city from preventable causes is greater than the Titanic's loss; the worst diseases are in people's attitude toward government; the only agency able to do educational work on a large enough scale to change anti-social attitude toward government is government; the only means is budgetary provision.

To make our local city government discharge efficiently its duties as our social-worker-in-chief, we need the enactment of a charter for the Rockefeller Foundation; we need the appropriation by Congress of \$200,000 for continuing the economy and efficiency work in national departments; and we need the interest of the social-worker group, including philanthropists who support social work, in the steps between now and June upon which will depend next year's budgetary provisions for social needs in Greater New York.